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THE

Bard's Ghost.

Ab Inferis.

Perth:

THOMAS RICHARDSON, 1 GEORGE STREET.

1864.

PRINTED BY ROBERT WHITTET, PERTH.



Miss Anne Dore
A gift from
Charlie Wright

At pompous language gaping crowds arise,
For simple words do simple souls despise ;
What's fine they deem poetic or profound,
And wit a thing of surface or of sound.

Only the few divest men's minds of dress,
To view them strong or weak in nakedness ;
Pleased with just thought, and charmed when well express'd,
They grasp the spoken truth of seeming jest.

THE BARD'S GHOST.

EVENTFUL night, moved with disquiet thought,
I wandered forth to cool my busy brain,
And seek a well-known spot, a moss-grown cliff,
That high o'erhangs the wide and restless deep ;
There I reclined in tranquil reverie,
Soothed by the stillness of the frosty night.

In cloudless vault fair shone the crescent moon,
'Midst sparkling of the ever-wondrous stars ;
And all was hushed save sleepy monotones
Of tide waves falling on the sands below ;
Or now, at intervals, the sea fowl's call
Brought clear, yet softened, from the distant strand.

By nature taught, I easily discerned
The notes of birds that make the sea their home,

From those come far from frozen marsh and moor,
Seeking the food left by each bounteous tide.
Thus tranquilised, I mused, when suddenly
There crossed the ridge, with rapid silent step,
The figure of a man, who, as he neared,
Called out in clear and genial Scottish voice,
“ Good e’en, my friend,—a glorious winter’s night,”
Then coming up, sat by me on the rock.
A plaid of homespun crossed his manly breast,
A bonnet broad half hid his noble brow,
But not his eyes, in which transparent shone
The light of genius, and mayhap its pride ;
All marked a spirit kindly, frank, and true,
Graced with a world of sweet and varied thought.
I have remarked, with natures of high stamp
Acquaintance needs no fixed parade of form,
Nor friendship the ordeal of long years :
With kindred minds they easily commune—
Heart finds them place at once, which they retain
As friends, —Ah me ! perhaps ne’er seen again !—
So on this strange and memorable night.

Long we discoursed of kingdoms, men, and art,
 Of what the world has done, and what may do,
 Freely expressing thought; yet, strange, it seemed
 As if he shunned discourse on present times,
 And frankly asking why, he thus replied:—

“ Silent I’d lain for many, many years,
 Unmoved by men’s vagaries o’er my head ;
 But that unlooked for din for Burn’s birth
 Broke this repose, and fairly roused me up :
 How could I rest ?—I am the poor bard’s ghost !
 Who, ne’er again in quiet sleep might rest,
 Without some inklin’ how the world wagged,
 Am freed at times to contemplate auld scenes ;
 Yet bound to tell my thoughts alone to him
 Who, showing a bold frankness erst mine ain,
 Should seek to move the veil of my reserve;—
 Be ye my trust, and hear, for auld langsyne,
 What never mortal man e’er heard before—
 A wraith’s opinions in plain Scottish verse,”

And thus he spoke :—

"How grand the progress since the day
 I toiled and sang my hamely lay ;
 Then, trade and thought in mony a way,
 Was sair repressed ;
 Now, ilka man may work and pray
 As seemeth best.

" For well'd-up truth has burst at last
 To irrigate a region vast,
 While narrow bigots stand aghast
 And mark the rush ;
 They feel that time has fairly past
 To stem the gush.

" Ah ! now ye reap what others wrought,
 On fields for which your fathers fought ;
 Far mair ye've got than ere they sought—
 Then wisely heed,
 Ye risk not blessings dearly bought,
 Through reckless greed.

"Be thankfu', use your freedom right,
Prove weel your pinions for the flight,
And frae the sun's o'er-burning light
Keep far awa',
Or wi' scorched wing and blinded sight,
Adoon ye fa'.

"See food in plenty, and to spare,
 All law and justice open, fair,
 A state wi' men o' prudence rare
In every region ;
 A press that watches a' wi' care,
In number legion.

“ For ane noo, counting ten times ten,
Each strivin’ to be farthest ben
In British news and foreign ken,
And whiles in baith ;
They heckle foreign kings and men,
Aft breedin’ skaith.

“ Whiles fraught wi’ party-spirit fell,
 Mak’ motherland like Milton’s hell—
 Politicals might ring her knell,

And pu’ thegeather,
 Wer’t true what vicious scribblers tell
 O’ ane anither.

“ The Tory cries ‘ From Whigs defend,
 Wha widen ills they feign to mend,
 Their promised feasts begin and end

In empty dishes :
 For self, their mischief meddlings tend
 The loaves and fishes.’

“ The Whig replies, ‘ Ye’d lord owre a’,
 Pride, pelf, and game your only law,—
 Keep the strong workman to the wa’,

In midst o’ plenty,
 And nightly spend in howf or ha’,
 The sweat o’ twenty.’

“ Then Whig and Tory bravely paint
 The Radical on pillage bent,
 Clean blind wi’ spite, ne’er takin’ tent

O’ real wants ;

To reckless folly giein’ vent,

In crazy rants ;

“ That few maun to the mony yield ;
 Queen, Lords, and Commons quit the field,
 While Radicals the sceptre wield

For true believers,

And England’s statecraft skein be reeled

. By landless weavers.

“ Mere party clavers,—naething new,
 And few sae doited’s think them true ;
 Still, party zeal might keep in view,

Some kind o’ mense,

And ken, to gie the Deil his due

Shows common sense.

“ The press her high behest should use
For truth,—ne’er wantonly abuse
What’s drumly, or may cross her views
In man or nation ;
Nor seek to fire up warfare’s fuse
By irritation.

" Her foul abuse o' French and France
 Mak's bugle sound and war-horse dance :
 Pity that scurril needs enhance
The news diurnal,
 Bloodshed be peril'd to advance
A penny journal !

“ Yestreen, France fought as England’s brither—
Brave men, meet help for ane anither,
Agreed the Russian’s schemes to wither,
Changed friendly hugs ;
Then crushed Sebastopol to smithers,
About their lugs.

“ Fought still as brithers ’yont the sea,
Whar China bodies, pity me !
Sank ships, and mingled blude wi’ tea,
And for that sin,
Like Delhi’s sepoys, sang “ Waes me,”
Around Pekin.

“ Yet still, ne’er fail ye to prepare,
That nane may tak’ ye unaware—
Be speakin’ less, and doin’ mair ;
Ne’er crawl nor crouch,
And war can hurt you fient a hair,
Except in pouch.

“ Tho’ doubtless we’re a mighty race,
And Britain bold of trumps the ace,
Why brag in every nation’s face
Like fools sublime,—
Sing ‘ Rule Britannia’ oot o’ place,
And oot o’ time ?

“Nor croak wi’ coofs our race is run,—
 God willing, it’s just weel begun—
 Of our stout millions every son

Maun first be slain.

A step no very easy won,

Or I’m mista’en.

“See all around the giant stride
 Of science, art, and a’ beside,
 That prove a country’s pith and pride,

And freedom’s blessin’,

Strength, trade, and wealth on every side,

Yet aye progressin’.

“Steam horses flee wi’ restless folks ;
 Lightnin’ brings news thro’ seas or rocks,
 Ye speir a question in a box—

It’s hardly canny,

Straight comes afar the price o’ stocks,

Or word frae granny.

" And sure to see (is worth a groat,)
 Poor crofts, used scarcely feed a goat,
 Improved, now gie a crop o' note
 And solid rent ;
 Scores o' braw farms I might quote,
 Ance whins and bent.

" And, cheerfu' sicht ! wark folk hae wark,
 Clean houses, books, their progress mark—
 There's thousands born to care and cark,
 Now snod and bien,
 And lasses that had scarce a sark,
 In crinoline.

" Troth, women are now wild for dress,
 (A fact aye kittle to express)
 For ane improved, ten mak' a mess :
 Short gowns and mutches
 Wad mair befit Meg, Jean, and Jess,
 Than robes like Duchess.

“ Fair is the sight of maidens neat,
 O’ gentle presence, voices sweet ;
 But every man wi’ fervid heat

His ban pronounces
 On wastfu’ jades that sweep the street
 Wi’ silken flounces.

“ But hold, and cease comment sinister,
 Think of a mother, wife, or sister,
 Of thy betrothed, when first ye kiss’d her

In Dian’s bower,
 If ane be gone, how ye have miss’d her,
 E’en to this hour.

“ If woman’s vain, troth *man* may spare her,
 Oft wise as he, aye kinder, fairer,
 Her tact mair fine, her courage rarer

In tryin’ hour.
 Wi’ thousand gifts, whar he’s nae sharer
 For her sweet dower.

“ Men’s vanity tak’s mony shapes,
 In pomp, purse, speech, and dress escapes ;
 Yet Calibans, whose gibes and gapes
 Scarce pass for human,
 Strut forth amang their brother apes
 To sneer at woman.

“ Ah ! would I saw what’s wisest, best,
 Keep honest progress wi’ the rest,
 Yet is religion weel profess’d,
 An’ crowds to hear it ;
 In a’ its garments men are dress’d,
 But scant the spirit.

“ A priesthood lang hath vainly striven
 By threats o’ hell to drive to heaven :
 A course that never yet has thriven
 Wi’ them that think—
 Whiles fools may to the well be driven,
 But will they drink ?

" Ah ! no—for threats and windy speeches,
Theatric ah's, and damning screeches,
To man nae consolation teaches,
Nor lights his load ;
But *love* the heart's dark chamber reaches
Wi' light from God.

“ Sae lang as sects contend like fools—
Mak’ heaven’s precepts party tools,
And vainly pride in Jewish rules
Kept to the letter,
In spite o’ sermons, missions, schools,
’Twill scarce be better.

“ Look at the dear good prudent Queen—
In a sma' Highland kirk I've seen,
Ne'er mindin' form or sect a preen,
Sae douce and fair :
Few earthly things that glad my een
Have pleased me mair.

"What wonder when men set their mark
 'Gainst cheerfulness, the end is dark :
 Poor souls ! they drive to drink, for hark !
It strikes eleven ;
 Now spyin' police attempt the wark
Sae sair misthriven.

" Ah ! had they taught both rich and poor,
 True faith is bright, no blank and dour,
 And fostered mirth on which they lour
 Wi' bigot frenzy,
 'Twould saved deep shame thro' whisky's lure,
 And thro' M'Kenzie.

" Yet, God be thanked ! there's wise and good,—
 Aye, thousands !—that wi' genial mood
 Smile at the fawsont pranks, tho' rude,
 Auld Scotland plays.
 By such she'll stand, by such she stood
 In evil days.

" Kind deeds throughout the land are spread,
 The auld and sickly housed and fed,
 Bairns and errin' women led
 Frae devil's den,
 E'en thieves get teachin', board, and bed,
 Like honest men.

" Aye, whiles in that some risk is braved,
 The knaves get out if dounce behaved ;
 But aft ill-favoured and jail shaved,
 Fail gettin' wark,
 Garotte, and tak' what's vainly craved
 Frae folk at dark.

" Tho' nought's frae imperfection clear,
 Yet good *will* come, there's little fear,
 Where nations struggle far or near
 Wi' griefs to war,
 Should Nick and a' his legions steer
 The wark to mar.

" The warld's good be Britain's aim :
 If France aye joined that noble game,
 They twa might many a tyrant tame
 By word in season ;
 Bring brutes by fear, if no by shame,
 To rule wi' reason.

“ ’Yont sea now rages war unspared,
Near hame the gory arm is bared ;
While Britain watchfu’, yet prepared,
Is courtin’ peace,—
It’s likely France and she’ll be paired
Ere troubles cease.

“ Is that time near ?—See Europe rent,
Roused millions up on changes bent ;
Yet a’ seems workin’ to cement
The twa great nations,
While baffled priests and bigots vent
Vain execrations.

“ Let mere invasion panics rest
On British steel and God’s behest,
Let every freeman do his best
That’s worth the name ;
Nor dread to see that deadly pest
Pollute his name.

“ Despise these coward soughs o’ war,
 Nae foe lands *here* to pale our star—
 Invade Britannia ! let them daur
 To lift her veil,
 And hope to pass the living bar
 To tell the tale.

“ Soon may the sun of peace arise,
 And strife be watched wi’ jealous eyes,
 When lands now warlike may despise
 Much useless glory,
 With nation, kingdom,—empire vies
 To change the story.

“ Proudly may Scotchmen mark their race
 Wi’ princely England keepin’ pace,
 In peace and war—proud, see them grace
 The legal throne,
 Clyde’s, Grant’s, and other heroes place,
 Wide world known.

“ Yes, whar mankind true manhood need,
For sicker work or warlike deed,
Whare’er the bold, plan, toil, or bleed
In noble strife,
There do my stalwart brothers speed,
Be’t death or life.

“ Oh ! may leal Scotland aye command,
At hame, on sea, in foreign land,
This weel won fame o’ head an’ hand,
To think and do,
Lang, lang, my dear auld country, stand
Loyal and true.”

So spake the ghostly bard, then sadly smiled,
Telling that he betimes must be afar ;
He raised his bonnet with proud courtesy,
To bid farwell, and left me on the cliff ;
Yet as he vanished by the ridge, a voice

Came back, clear echoed in the silent night—
“ Good e’en again, my friend, and fare ye weel.”
Long I remained without a wish to move,
Half list’ning to the oft recurring wave :
Wild plaintive tones were floating o’er the deep,
And hours past midnight found me resting still,
In pleased and dreamy thought
Beside the sea.

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